

Message Text

SECRET

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15/14

ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10 OMB-01

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FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7942

SECDE (DSAA) WASHDC

CINCPAC

INFO JCS WASHDC

CSAF WASHDC

CINCPACAF

COMUSTDC

CHMAAG CHINA TAIPEI TW

S E C R E T TAIPEI 8069

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y P A R A 2 L I N E 7

JOINT EMBASSY/MAAG MESSAGE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, TW

SUBJECT: ROC FIGHTER AIRCRAFT REQUIREMENTS

1. THE ROC, WHICH IS HEAVILY OUTNUMBERED BY THE PRC IN THE AIR BUT QUALITATIVELY SOUND, IS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT AIR DEFENSE IN THE FUTURE. THE RECENT SALE OF BRITISH ROLLS-ROYCE JET ENGINES TO THE PRC AND SPECULATION ON SALE OF FRENCH MIRAGE FIGHTERS TO PRC, HAVE FURTHER HEIGHTENED ROC CONCERNS.

2. JSOP CALLS FOR 16 ROC FIGHTER SQUADRONS WITH ABOUT 300 AIRCRAFT IN 1980. THE INVENTORY WOULD INCLUDE THE 120 F-5E ALREADY CLEARED FOR COPRODUCTION, 60 F5A/MMXMXMMMB AND ABOUT 50 OBSOLESCE F-104'S WHICH THE ROC HOPES TO KEEP OPERATIONAL THROUGH 1981. WE CAN EXPECT ATTRITION FROM THESE

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TOTALS.EIGHT-NINE F-100' S AND 51 F-86S ON HAND ARE

EXPECTED TO BE UNSUPPORTABLE BEYOND 1977 AND THE ROCAF IS ALREADY EXPERIENCING HIGH AIRCRAFT PARTS SHORTAGES. THEREFORE, WE ARE RECOMMENDING COPRODUCTION OF 80 ADDITIONAL F-5E/F TO REACH JSOP APPROVED LEVEL.

3. GENERAL LAI MING-TANG, CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF HAS ASKED CHIEF MAAG FOR A MORE DEFINITIVE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION WHETHER THE ROC WILL BE PERMITTED TO PROCURE THE F-16. HE RECENTLY RAISED SUBJECT WITH AMBASSADOR AS WELL. LAI ALSO WANTS TO KNOW IF THE ROC WILL BE ALLOWED TO COPRODUCE MORE THAN 120 F-5E'S. LAI HAS STATED THAT IF THE ROC CANNOT BUY AMERICAN FIGHTER AIRCRAFT THEN THEY MUST SEEK AIRCRAFT ELSEWHERE EVEN THOUGH SUCH ACTION IS AGAINST ROC POLICY AND PURCHASING SOPHISTICATED AIRCRAFT FROM A THIRD COUNTRY WOULD RISK INTRODUCING LOGISTICAL COMPLICATIONS WHICH WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT COMBAT READINESS OF THE ROC AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM. MOREOVER, PROCUREMENT OF SUCH AIRCRAFT, E.G., ISRAELI F-4S, ITALIAN F-104S, OR OTHER COMPARABLE FIGHTERS FROM A THIRD COUNTRY WOULD BE AN EXCEEDINGLY EXPENSIVE VENTURE.

4. MAAG HAS ALREADY REQUESTED DATA ON THE F-16. AN EARLY DECISION ON RELEASE OF THIS DATA IS DESIRABLE FOR PLANNING PURPOSES ALTHOUGH WE APPRECIATE THAT THIS MATTER MAY REQUIRE FURTHER WASHINGTON STUDY.

5. CONTINUED COPRODUCTION OF UP TO 80 MORE F-5E/F (FOR A TOTAL OF 200) WILL MEET ROC NEEDS IN THE 1978-82 TIMEFRAME. THESE AIRCRAFT WITH THE IMPROVED HAWK, THE UPGRADED NIKE SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILES, AND THE SEMI-AUTOMATED AIR DEFENSE COMMAND AND CONTROL SYSTEM WILL PROVIDE A FORMIDABLE AIR DEFENSE FOR TAIWAN. THE F-16 AS A REPLACEMENT FOR F-104'S IN THE 1982-83 TIMEFRAME WOULD BE A SECOND STEP.

6. THE F-5E IS A DEFENSIVE SYSTEM AND THE ROC IS ALREADY ENGAGED IN A COPRODUCTION PROGRAM; THEREFORE, POLITICAL SENSITIVITIES SHOULD BE LESS THAN ANY OTHER OPTION INVOLVING THE US. COPRODUCTION TO MEET FUTURE NEEDS IS A LOGICAL STEP AND WILL NOT AFFECT THE EXISTING ARMS BALANCE.

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7. COUNTRY TEAM STRONGLY SUPPORTS PROPOSAL TO ALLOW ROC TO CONTINUE COPRODUCTION OF UP TO 80 MORE F-5E/F AIRCRAFT FOR A TOTAL OF 200. REQUEST AUTHORITY AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE TO INFORM GROC THAT SUCH ADDITIONAL COPRODUCTION REQUEST WOULD BE APPROVED UPON ITS FORMAL SUBMISSION SO THAT GROC CAN PROCEED WITH PLANNING AND TIMELY PROCUREMENT. UNGER

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